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The Duty of the Christian Minister recommended

In a C H A R G E;

A N D

Christ's Compassion on the Multitude considered

In a S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT THE

O R D I N A T I O N

OF THE

Rev. S A M U E L E V A N S,

DECEMBER 27th. 1780, at WEDMORE SOMERSETSHIRE.

The C H A R G E

By J O B D A V I D.

The S E R M O N

By J O S H U A T O U L M I N M.A.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED AN

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

By P H I L I P A D A M S.

Published at the unanimous and earnest Request of the
Churches at WEDMORE and CROSCOMBE.

T A U N T O N:

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It evidently appears, I think, by the Acts of the apostles, and other parts of the New Testament, that it is the duty, or rather the privilege of churches to chuse their own Ministers; and that when any church has fixed upon any person whom they think to be fit and worthy of this office, they are to be set apart for this great and important work, by fasting, prayer, and the imposition of hands.

Thus we read that when God had designed Barnabas and Saul, for the great work of travelling into the several parts of the world to preach the gospel, they were recommended to this work, by fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands, Acts the 13. v.2 3.*

* Whereas some scruple the laying on of hands, in the ordination of Ministers; first, because Protestant Dissenting Ministers, pretend to no power of bestowing any extraordinary endowment upon him whom they ordain; and Secondly, because of the superstitious and bad use which some have made of it, in pretending to a power which they have not, nor ever had: I would recommend it to the serious consideration of the candid reader, whether we have not reason to believe that the whole affair we read of in the 13th. chap. of the Acts, and the beginning was by the direction of the holy-ghost: I mean the laying on of hands, fasting and prayer, as well as the destination of Barnabas and Saul to the work assigned them. For I think we have as good reason to believe that the prophets and teachers there mentioned, were directed to the means, as well and to the object of their destination: especially, when we consider that it was the general practice of those times, and that not only of the apostles, but also of the Presbyters, the prophets and teachers in setting apart men for any particular work or service in the church. Besides let it be considered that it is hard to be proved that by the laying on of hands in the case before us, these prophets and teachers conveyed any extraordinary gift upon those two men at this time: for we have no reason to doubt, but abundant cause to believe, that both of them were already endowed with the miraculous gifts of the holy ghost, as well as the rest of the apostles: for this was ten years after the apostle Pauls conversion, besides the apostle faith that he received his apostleship not of men but of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1. 1. To this I add, that it ought to be considered that the doctrine of laying on of hands, is by the apostle to the Hebrews, placed amongst the first or fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christ, Heb. 6. 2. We have therefore, I think, as much reason to lay aside Baptism and the Lords Supper because some men have made a perverse use of them and abused them to superstition, as we have to lay aside this apostolical practice. And had we as good proof from scripture for Infant Baptism, as we have for the laying on of hands in the ordination of Ministers, I think, we should have no reason to scruple it; but should have abundant reason and cause to comply with it.

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And that the Deacons of the churches are to be chosen after the same manner, and to be separated and set apart for their work by the same means, as before mentioned, appears by the direction of the apostles concerning the seven Deacons: we read of it in the 6 chapter of the Acts, the 5th. and following verses: and this practice of setting apart Ministers for this great and good work, has been followed in all ages of the christian church, as I think, by all the churches who act upon the plan of the apostolical age.

It is in order to comply with our duty as recommended by the apostles and primitive christians, that we are assembled together at this time in order to set apart this our Reverend Brother to the great work of preaching the word, and administering the ordinances of the gospel.

Not that we hereby pretend to convey or bestow any extraordinary endowment upon him, much less the miraculous gifts of the holy Ghost; for the miraculous gifts and graces of the Holy-Ghost, we think, ceased with the apostolical age, or soon after it but it is to point him out as a person already fitted for this work, and by our prayers and supplications to God on his behalf, to recommend him to the grace of God, and to the guidance of the holy Spirit, to assist him in his work, that abundant success may attend his ministry.

It has, I think, been a custom for a candidate for the ministry, to give a definition of his faith, at the time of his ordination, to the people whom he is appointed to serve; from whence this custom arose, I am not certain: we do not find any such thing mentioned in the acts of the apostles: and I can see no absolute necessity for it, where a man has preached some time before his ordination among the people over whom

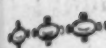
I shall conclude this note, in the words of the Rev. Mr. WARD, in his introduction to the ordination of the Rev. Mr. ISAAC SMITH, page the 14th. (with whom I entirely agree in this point) where He saith; "To myself the imposition of hands seems decent, scriptural and regular: nor do I see any reason to scruple or disuse it, on the account of the injudicious opinions of some concerning it, or the vain and excessive pretences which have been annexed to it."

whom he is to be ordained; for hereby they are supposed to know in some measure what his sentiments are. As therefore this is the case with respect to our Reverend Brother here present,

I proceed only to ask you my friends and brethren of the Baptist church of *Wedmort*, and the Baptist Church of *Croftum*; Whether you do chuse this our Reverend Brother **SAMUEL EVANS** to be your minister and Pastor, to go in and out before you, to instruct you in the great things of God's law, by preaching the word, and administering the ordinances amongst you.

NB. To this Consent was given by lifting up their right Hands.

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The Duty of the CHRISTIAN MINISTER recommended
In a CHARGE, &c.

THE part that is allotted me in the solemn service of this day, is to address you, my dear Sir, who have just taken upon you the office of a pastor. It would have given me sincere pleasure had this arduous business devolved on one of my honoured fathers, or brethren, who might be better qualified to remind you of the principal objects of your ministry. But since you have requested me to undertake this task, my long acquaintance with you, and the christian respect I bear to you, forbid my resisting your wishes, being fully satisfied that you will give your attention whilst I may be recommending to you the advice of the apostle Paul to his friend Timothy, and enforcing it with suitable considerations.

2 Timothy 2 Chapter 15th. verse.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

THIS interesting advice should be received by the christian minister with warm approbation, in every age.

It is as applicable to us as it was to the evangelist Timothy, to whom it was originally given. We serve the same master and should be equally-solicitous for his honour and approbation: We have the same infirmities to resist: The same enemies to conquer; and the same end to attain.

As protestant dissenting ministers, we stand nearly on the same ground with the person to whom my text was originally addressed, and therefore, my Brother, I trust you will pay all due deference to the authority of the apostle Paul: You will endeavour to obtain that high dignity of being approved unto God, you will discover this ardor to all who stand
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in connexion with you, and make your various studies and pursuits to center in this point.

In order hereto permit me

I. To remind you of the end of your life and ministry
The divine approbation :

II. Suggest to you how you are to obtain this end,
Study: and

III. To point out some considerations to animate your endeavours to perform the christian and ministerial functions, in such a manner as to be approved of God, and finally to receive the plaudits of your blessed Savior.

I. I am to remind you of the end of your life and ministry
The divine approbation.

Remember, Sir, that you are in a peculiarly interesting sense the servant of God. Beside the common right he has in you as your creator, benefactor, and savior, he claims you as his ambassador. Your duty is to transact affairs for him of the first magnitude;—to shew to sinful perishing men the way of salvation. The Lord then expects that you eye him in all your ways; that his fear should be your governing principle, and his approbation the object of your highest wishes. Whilst I am thus reminding you how worthy of your noblest exertion is the testimony of the divine spirit, that you are the approved servant of God, you will do me the justice, I am persuaded, to understand me in a latitude consonant to the genius and tendency of the gospel.

You will acquit me from the supposition, that I would insinuate to you, you can merit the *favor of God* by any of your doings, as a christian or a minister. In that important blessing you were interested previously to your receiving the talents which you now possess, previously to your being admitted to the high office of a pastor. But then you are to remember that the God whom you serve must distinguish the precious from the vile, must observe the difference in character where

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it exists, and consequently must, agreeably to all his perfections, and to the wise constitution by which he governs intelligent agents, approve of those who resemble him in his moral attributes and delight to obey his voice and do his will. These are the criteria by which his friends are distinguished from others, according to the genuine principles of that Gospel to which your life and actions should be conformable. A contrary supposition would make God the Author of confusion, without wisdom and goodness to mark his character and govern his views: nay such an hypothesis would represent the God of holiness to delight in sin, as in righteousness; to approve of impenitent rebels, as of his believing dutiful subjects.

But you have not so learned Christ: You know that the Lord hath connected holiness and happiness together, the fruits of the Christian and the Pastor with their enjoyments in the realms of light and love. Thirst then my Brother, after being approved of God, it is the highest honor that you can receive, and the highest felicity you can experience. Every consideration of importance tends to this point; every grateful disposition and elevated feeling should influence you to prefer the favor of God, the countenance of Christ, and the testimony of a good conscience, to all the plausible overtures of an ensnaring world. This was the governing principle of the great St. Paul; by it he braved danger, conquered prejudices, and despised momentary allurements. "None of these things (said he) move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God." *Acts* 20 24. Pursuing the line of conduct which I am now recommending to you the same author in the view of martyrdom could express himself in the language of triumphant faith: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day, and not to me only but all those who love his appearing." *2 Timothy*, 4. 7. 8.

How

How animating the view ! How bright the prospect ! The divine approbation claims your attention, as a christian and as a minister of the gospel.

1st. As a Christian. You and myself must appear at the judgment seat of Christ, that our character as men and christians may be scrutinized and finally settled. If we do not live a life answerable to the requisitions of the Gospel, a life which may furnish us with a well-grounded hope that we are renewed, and are advancing in holiness, with what face can we inculcate the great duties of the gospel on others ? If we do not watch over our own souls how can it be expected that we should discharge, with fidelity, the several duties which we owe to the souls of our fellow men ? Unless we feed on the great and glorious truths of the gospel, and are animated and strengthened by them ; unless we taste of the good word of God and the power of the world to come ; unless Christ be precious to our own souls in viewing his fulness and in feeling our want of him ; in a word, unless we delight in the duties and rejoice in the discoveries of the new Testament ; what sort of ministers are we likely to be ? Shall we not be the blind leading on the blind to destruction ? My respected friend, if you would be an honorable, consistent, successful minister of Jesus Christ, cultivate the divine life in your own soul ; cherish the godly principle ; it will make your other Duties easy to you ; it will enable you to speak with conscious authority to men : Your life, your feelings and your doctrines being in perpetual harmony, will furnish you with an amazing superiority over the prejudices and calumnies of the world. There is not a creature in the universe so truly despicable as a profligate christian minister ; there cannot be a more harlequin character than His, who would teach others obligations the influence of which he has never experienced. But my knowledge of you Brother, forbids my enlarging ; you view the character at which I have glanced with horror—I therefore drop it ; and go on

2dly. To remind you that you should covet the divine approbation as a minister of the gospel of peace- Let God,

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ever in your view; impress your soul with his omnipresence and frequently reflect that you are employed by him.

In approving yourself to God in the ministerial capacity, you will be careful to consult his will and not to lean too implicitly on your own understanding. There remains in the best of us too strong a propensity to oppose the pure and benign doctrines of Jesus Christ: to turn aside from the path which he has marked out for us, and to erect our own conceits on the ruin of the truths of revelation. It becomes you to bring back your views carefully to the standard of rectitude; to derive your knowledge of the great concerns of life and immortality from the revelation of the new Testament; and ever to conduct yourself as the servant of your fellow men, in a manner that is consistent with the allegiance which you owe to your God and Savior. You will shew yourself approved unto God as a gospel minister, when you appear anxious after bringing penitent sinners to Christ as the medium of their access to God; when you inculcate with energy repentance towards God, and holiness of heart and life; when your zeal has for its object the reconciling of sinners to the greatest and best of beings; and when your most unwearied endeavors are employed to give efficacy to the pure, peaceable principles of the gospel of Christ, which are equally removed from the senseless superstition of the ignorant and illiberal, and the frigid formality of the careless and sceptical.

The truths of the gospel are living waters, constantly quenching the rage of novelty and damping the irregular propensities of the soul. Consider that christianity is a system not of speculation but to be reduced into practice. It is to be credited and obeyed. It has its origin in love: It was intended to restore peace on earth, to destroy the enmity, not only betwixt man and God, but also betwixt man and his neighbor. A religion of benevolence! admirably calculated to promote personal and social happiness, and to banish from amongst us all those poisonous principles which are the curse and punishment of mankind.

If you would be the approved minister of God, receive those tenets with suspicion which meet in extremes. Such on the one hand as would degrade Christ in the œconomy of redemption, depreciate the merit of his life and the efficacy of his sufferings, trample under foot the blood of the covenant, and do despite to the spirit of grace; that would represent the Deity as an idle spectator of the concerns of mortals, either incapable or unwilling to succor them, unless impelled by necessity—I say on the one hand avoid those deluding novelties; and on the other all those misrepresentations of the gospel which feed the principles of malevolence in the breast; which promote spiritual pride; circumscribe the compassion and love of God; release the obligations of holiness, and render useless the preaching of repentance; in short all such doctrines as are not after godliness, tending to give life and energy to the corruptions of the flesh or the mind, and to banish from the world the genuine spirit of Jesus Christ, should make *no part* of your public ministry.

Your love to God; I trust, my good Brother, is too strong ever to suffer you to be hurried away to dangerous extremes from the plain truths of revelation by the plaudits of men. Never sacrifice your conscience, your honor, your integrity and piety on the altar of party applause; for you are not to learn that those who may hail you with their hosannas this hour, may cry out the next, crucify him!

The gospel minister who is for ever studying the humors of his hearers with the view to gratify them in preference to the dictates of the Holy Ghost—the minister that will strenuously contend for unscriptural phrases as making an essential part of his devotion, because the ignorance or impiety of men have sanctified the use of them; the minister who pays more regard to sound than sense, and avails himself of the weakness of any of his auditors to keep them unacquainted with the enlivening benevolent principles of the gospel; the minister who makes the prejudices of others the will of his public ministration is ——— but let me turn with indignation from so mean and wretched a character, equally despised by God, and all good men. Let me re-

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mind you in the spirit of love to seek the honor that is from above, to walk in the simplicity of the gospel, and to have the rejoicings of the holy apostles: And tho' Israel be not gathered your reward is with the Lord, and your judgment is with your God. I mean not, my worthy friend, to dissuade you from availing yourself of the innocent foibles of men to save their souls. You may in this sense become all things to all men as far as your duty to God will admit. But dare think for yourself. You know but in part. Diverst yourself of all preconceptions; — follow the dictates of truth and seriously reflect that to your own master you stand or fall. The rule of your conduct is the *Bible* — rest satisfied with it. It is utterly unworthy of a nonconformist minister to call any man master upon earth.

But I must proceed

II. To suggest to you how you are to approve yourself to God; *Study.*

Give diligence, or diligently endeavor, as the original word signifies. It is the same as is rendered in chapter the 4th. verse the 9th. and 21st by the phrase *do thy diligence* i. e. endeavor as much as in you lies to shew yourself the faithful servant of God, worthy of the trust reposed in you.

1st. Be much in prayer. converse with your Maker, my Brother, that you may partake of his spirit in a more abundant manner to lead you into all truth. If piety be kept alive in your own soul, it is more than probable it will not fail of making favorable impressions on the minds of your hearers. Be instant in prayer for divine directions in the choice of your subjects, and for the favor of godliness when you meet with the people of your charge. The warm piety of the ministers of the last century deserves your imitation, whilst you may avail yourself of the improvements of later periods in respect to pulpit compositions. Study to inform and improve your hearers in the great concerns of salvation.

Study

edly. Study the scriptures, if you would be approved of God. - You are to minister the word of God; to receive your directions and supports from these sound oracles. Hence it becomes you to give diligent heed to the word spoken, least at any time it should be forgotten by you. Seriously reflect that the rule of your public ministry is laid down for your conformity in the bible, and that all your endeavors should be directed to discover the mind of the spirit, and not in search of new matter which the records of inspiration do not contain. Bending your attention to the word of God, you will find directions to regulate your life by the maxims of the highest wisdom, whilst the most animating views are presented to you to brighten your hope and give efficacy to your conversation.

If you, Sir, would live soberly, righteously and godly in the present world; if you would be a wise and prudent minister of Jesus Christ; if you would follow the example of the great Apollos, and be mighty in the scriptures; if you would honor your Savior by obeying his command; and if you would approve yourself the faithful servant of the Most High, "search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these testify of the Savior."

Whilst I am thus urging you to peruse the gospel, you may easily perceive that it is not necessary I should descend into particulars to remind you of the manner in which you should behave in the church and the world, and of the duties which you owe to God, to your neighbour and to yourself,

But I cannot close this part of my subject without reminding you that you should study and digest the discourses which you deliver in the course of your ministry to the people of your charge. This is a duty which you owe them, and it is a duty, which your wishes for the success of the gospel, will prompt you to discharge with fidelity.

You cannot expect to explain with perspicuity and success the glories of our Emanuel, the wisdom and benevolence of the new covenant; you cannot illustrate the divine

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perfections in their variety and beauty, as employed from age to age in the recovery of human nature, and shew with propriety the connection there is betwixt the various dispensations of God, and the manner they have been subservient to each other in perfecting the plan of the divine mercy in the final salvation of men by Jesus Christ, *without study.*

You will not, my good brother, imitate the mode of preaching of those illiterate itinerants whose ravings insult common sense, as their spirit does christianity. Perhaps the description of the apostle Jude, in his epistle, verse 13th may not be thought inapplicable to men whose moral governing principles are as problematical as their ability rightly to divide the word of truth. Men of such a cast can do honor to no cause, and it particularly becomes Protestant Dissenters to be careful that they encourage only ministers who *understand the grounds* on which the rights of conscience are to be supported, and who possess integrity and fortitude sufficient to abide by truth, when discovered, in all its consequences.* I speak, my brother, with freedom to you, and from a full persuasion that the interest of learning and piety, amongst the nonconformists, is no longer supported when the ministry becomes contemptible.

Time would fail me to enumerate the studies which are most intimately connected with your employ as a minister of the gospel of the grace of God. The evidences of christianity should be well digested by you: jewish antiquities also and geography; ancient history, and the various customs of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, well deserve your notice, that you may explain with success many passages of sacred writ. But I must hasten,

III.

* By the above paragraph it is not intended to reflect on the pious and conscientious of any party. It respects those *irregulars* who are sent by no body, and appear to have nothing in view but idleness and imposition.

III. To point out some considerations to animate your endeavours to perform the christian and ministerial functions in such a manner as to be approved of God, and finally to receive the plaudits of your blessed Savior.

Tho' we have the treasure of the gospel in earthen vessels, yet we are not destitute of encouragements to prosecute our duty with steadfastness and zeal. It is true we have not high worldly emoluments annexed to our office, nor worldly pomp to command our attachment to the ministerial character, yet we are not insensible of the dignity of our embassy and the honor which we derive from being employed by the King of Kings: employed to preach Christ and him crucified; to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, and as instruments to deliver their souls from death that their life may see light. And who can tell the importance of saving souls!

Conscious of our many infirmities, the Lord in compassion to our weakness hath promised supports. His grace is sufficient to qualify us for the ministerial office, and to support us under the many discouragements which some times attend it. Derive succors from his allsufficiency whilst you aspire after that rejoicing, even the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, you have your conversation in the world.

To have a witness in the consciences of your people of your most strenuous endeavors to be the favor of life unto life unto them, and that it is your hearts desire and prayer to God that they may be saved, is one of the most encouraging considerations that you can feel this side an eternal world.

Finally, my beloved Brother, extend your views beyond the verge of time. Look upward! — Look forward for the blessed hope! Realize the coming of your savior, attended with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God! Anticipate that illustrious period when you shall join compa-

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ny with all good ministers, and make one in the train of the illustrious Judge! What emotions of gratitude and love will you then feel to your savior, who counted you faithful to speak in his name, and put you in the ministry. And with what astonishment will you hear the sentence pronounced "Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will makethee ruler over many, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

May you then meet the people of your charge, and your Brethren who join in the solemnities of this day!

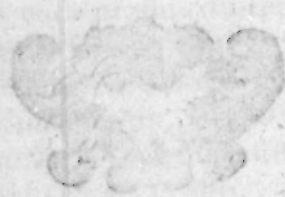
I have done. "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified."



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...the Lord will
...in his name and in the name of the Father
...the Father will you have the Father's presence
...all that thou good and faithful servant thou shalt
...and a few things I will write thee over again



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The S E R M O N.

Christ's Compassion to the Multitude.

Matthew IX. 36. 37. 38.

But when he saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto his disciples, The Harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

JUDEAH, the scene of our Lord's ministry and the principal transactions recorded in the scriptures, was not, like ours, a Country in which Trade and Commerce flourished; but Agriculture and the care of Cattle were the chief objects of attention and sources of wealth and support. Hence we meet in the scriptures, with frequent allusions to a country life, and our Lord borrows from it his figures and comparisons. In some places both in the prophets, his own discourses and the writings of the Apostles, his own character is described under allusions to that of a shepherd; and He is stiled "the good Shepherd, and the great Shepherd." In other passages his Disciples, and those also who were destitute of religious instructions, and divine Teachers are compared to sheep. The language of the Text is of this kind, borrowed from the condition of wandering sheep, and the concerns of agriculture. The propriety and force of this language will appear as we illustrate the words. We here see Christ's compassionate regard for the multitudes which followed Him——It drew from him an affecting reflection upon their state——And led him to give his Disciples a particular and pertinent Exhortation. It may be presumed that we cannot review these particulars without some improvement.



v. 36. The Historian informs us that "When Christ saw the Multitudes He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as Sheep having no Shepherd." Our Lord was now passing through the Cities and Villages, teaching in their Synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. Multitudes drawn by the fame of his miracles and character flock around him, to hear his doctrines and see his works, they fainted through the fatigue of their journey and the constancy of their attendance upon his preaching. The crowds and eagerness, with which they followed him, were very expressive of their thirst after instruction and knowledge and a sign of their unhappy state in the respective places of their abode, as destitute of affectionate and faithful teachers. Our Lord beheld them with tenderness and compassion as sheep that had no shepherd.

Scribes and Teachers of the law indeed were dispersed over Judeah and taught in every Synagogue : but they were actuated by worldly views and not by an affectionate and disinterested concern for the sheep ; taught the people the traditions of men instead of the commands of God ; burdened them with a variety of useless observances and ceremonies, and misled them by their evasive and corrupt comments on the law. Christ, knowing their condition, felt a very affectionate concern for them. Here we see the compassionate Friend to the souls of men—and we are taught to pity those who do not enjoy sound and faithful instruction.

1st. Let us pause to contemplate Jesus, the compassionate Friend of Souls. The multitudes were collected round him, and from the crowds in which they followed him, He might perceive what wonder and expectation his works had raised. But in circumstances so captivating to vanity, so flattering to the love of applause and of fame, our good Master appears to have felt only sentiments of kindness and benevolence.

"The Evangelist informs us, that immediately before He had expressed his compassion on the multitude, He had been healing all manner of disease and sickness among them; and very probably the people as they stood around him, were expressing their gratitude and joy on the occasion. This to any other person would have given complete satisfaction and delight, Jesus however had too deep an insight into the interests of human nature, to be satisfied with these events. He knew that the diseases of the body and all visible calamities of life were but trifling when compared with the unseen and everlasting miseries which arise from ignorance and guilt, or what he calls the loss of the immortal soul.* His heart therefore, instead of being elated with selfish joy, was melted into generous compassion. He thought not of his own success and reputation, but of their wants and necessities, as destitute of wise and enlightened, faithful and affectionate Teachers.

He looked upon them as misled, as wandering from the way of truth and life, and in danger of perishing for lack of sound knowledge. Jesus, beholding the multitudes in this affecting light "was moved with compassion on them, because they were as Sheep without a Shepherd." Under what a tender image did our Lord regard them! An Image drawn from the condition of the most gentle and helpless animals, scattered and dispersed, a prey to scorching heats or ravenous beasts, without a Shepherd to lead them to fruitful pastures, or to still waters. The situation of the Multitudes appeared to the mind of Christ under this affecting light, and He could not think of it without affection and tenderness. Humanity and compassion work within him; a compassion worthy of himself who came to seek and to save that which was lost; who, in the end, laid down his life for the sheep. He was not less amiable in shewing his compassion, than He was great and glorious in healing every sickness and every disease. Let us learn to imitate this compassion of Jesus.

* CRAIG'S Essay on the life of Christ P. 53

2dly. — This is the other instruction arising from the part of our subject now before us: namely, that we pity such as do not enjoy wise and faithful instruction. To what kind and generous efforts would this divine pity prompt? It would excite us to assist every scheme of spreading knowledge and truth, and to strengthen the hands of those who are employed in teaching sacred knowledge. In what case should the heart feel compassion if not in this?

If a flock of sheep, destitute of a protector and care and ready to perish by want and thirst, cannot be seen without moving the soft sensibilities of our nature; shall *Man* fail of happiness and immortality, shall *Man* wander in the paths of error and destruction, shall *reasonable* creatures, formed for mirth and heaven, miss of their perfection and happiness for want of instruction—and no eye pity them; no heart be drawn out in compassion towards them? Surely we know not our selves the excellence of truth and the worth of eternal life, or we should lament the case of those who are in danger of never attaining to the enjoyment of these great and everlasting blessings. The most christian compassion is compassion to the souls of men: for it is most like to that which Christ felt.

If the sentiments He expressed for the multitudes that followed him be just or amiable: we ought to lay open our hearts to the force of the same sentiments. The benevolence and compassion of Christ, in the case before us, methinks, can not but meet with our approbation. We learn then our duty, to what emotions we should indulge, namely, those of kindness and pity for such as are exposed to the danger of perishing for lack of knowledge and as sheep having no shepherd. Our Lord's feeling for such led him into an affecting reflection upon their case v. 37.

"Then saith he to his Disciples, the harvest truly is "plenteous; but the labourers are few." There is great room for exertions in the cause of truth and piety; but there are only a few who are disposed to the good work. "The "Harvest is great," There are great multitudes who discover a love of the truth, and a readiness to embrace
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the gospel of the kingdom. This our Lord appears to have spoken in reference to the vast numbers that followed him from all parts: and by these words He intimates the populousness of the scene of his ministry—and the inclination of the people to receive his doctrine.

There was much work to do. The land of Canaan was then filled with inhabitants: and the people were from every quarter flocking to the standard of truth which Christ was setting up. Yet far more numerous were the inhabitants of the surrounding Heathen nations, "who sat in the dark region of the shadow of death." The Gospel was to be preached to every creature. Each corner of the world was to hear the word of the kingdom: and to the remotest parts of the earth was the sound of salvation to be sent. Our Lord's comprehensive eye surveyed the extensive field of the world, in which the seeds of truth and grace were to be sown. He saw it over-ran with thorns and weeds: and He was fully sensible of the vast labours and difficulties which would attend the planting of the Gospel in it. It was therefore a matter of painful reflection to our Lord, "that the labourers were few."

There were but few, very few sufficiently enlightened and disposed to instruct even the land of Judeah, though it had its Priests and Scribes. What then was the case as to the world at large with respect to the number of religious instructors? It had scarcely any: It had then none who were themselves acquainted with the things of the kingdom of God. The seventy were not yet commissioned and sent forth nor even the twelve Apostles to preach the approach of the kingdom of heaven. The time was not yet come when they who taught the words of salvation, the servants of the most high God, should be sent forth to all nations and empowered to preach the gospel to every creature. Such being the religious state of the world, our Lord meant to awaken the zeal of his disciples and to call forth all their efforts towards enlightening and reforming it.

It may be apprehended that the same reflection is not applicable

applicable to our day; and least of all to this nation. Our times, it may be allowed, have much the advantage over the period here referred to: yet there is a sufficient scope for the activity and zeal of an increasing number of able & faithful labourers. Is there no lack of knowledge among us? Are there no parts of this populous kingdom involved in gross ignorance, or sunk in dissoluteness of manners? Are there none who need to be taught the first principles of the knowledge of Christ? none who are strangers to the power of of godliness; none whose conduct calls for the affectionate, and fervent labours of a faithful minister, to turn them from the error of their ways? the number of such it may be feared is not small. Are the labourers equal in number to the sphere of service and usefulness which offers? We have just reason to apprehend that they are not.

Did all who bear the character glow with zeal for truth; with devotion and benevolence? Were all Scribes well-instructed in the things of the kingdom of God? Were all diligent and faithful? "Yet there are many Parishes in the kingdom that are not statedly supplied with a minister of any kind, and other places have but one, large enough to furnish employment for several, were they ever so labourious."* In the established Church we are told, that the number of Curates is greatly and daily decreasing. Among us Dissenters it seems "that the number of our ministers rather continues to decline. Many of our congregations are destitute, and breaking up for want of suitable supplies, and the number of candidates for the ministry in our Academies is not proportional to the demands of our Churches."* In this state of things it becomes those who wish well to the cause of truth and piety, to adopt and apply the exhortation our divine Master gives to his disciples.

V. 38, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest; that He would send forth labourers into his Harvest." Christ fought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent

* S. Palmer's Sermon on the death of Dr. Ashworth. p 12. 13.

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sent Him. We accordingly find him refering every thing to his FATHER: speaking of HIM as the Author of his doctrines and miracles. On all occasions He raises the thoughts of his hearers and disciples to his FATHER, as the Being who sent him into the world and whose will he came to execute: under authority and commission from whom He acted in his whole undertaking and whose kingdom he came to preach and set up. Agreeably to these devout sentiments which run through all his discourses he directs his disciples in the text, to regard his FATHER as the Lord of the Harvest, as the original Author of the dispensation of truth and grace; as presiding over the important work of enlightening and reforming the world, and as raising up, by his influence and providence, fit persons for this benevolent service and giving them their powers and commission. Therefore he exhorts his disciples to address themselves and to pray; "that he would send forth labourers into his Harvest."

It hath been observed, that the word rendered *send forth* properly signifies to *thrust out* "and whoever considers the "immense difficulties and oppositions," says the excellent Dr. Doddridge, with which every Minister of "Christ's "kingdom was sure to encounter in those early days of it, "will see the necessity of some unusual energy and impulse "on the mind to lead any to undertake it."* In every age and in any circumstances it is a Character of that importance and influence, that there is great propriety in making it the subject of our fervent prayers;—That the Being, who fixeth the bounds of our habitation and chooseth our lot for us, would raise up a succession of men to fill it with dignity, abilities and success. As long as there are rational creatures to be led to the knowledge of divine truth and formed to the practice of goodness, it will be our duty as it was that of Christ's first disciples, to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth Labourers into his harvest: a duty, to which we are equally incited by the principles of piety and the sentiments of benevolence; by the love of truth and the desire of human happiness.

* See Doddridge in loc.

Pray then, Christians, that the Father of Spirits would incline young Persons to devote themselves, from right views and the noblest ends, to the work of the ministry. Pray that the Author of every good gift would furnish them with every grace and gift that may fit them for supporting it with acceptance and success. Pray that the ignorant may never want an enlightened Teacher to instruct them, nor the vicious a faithful Pastor to admonish and reform them. Pray, that from the seminaries of learning and the schools of the Prophets may come forth those who will shine as lights in the world; and, like the salt of the earth may season men with wisdom and truth.

Can the friends of righteousness and the lovers of the Gospel forget these important objects, when in the happy moments of a warm and enlarged devotion, they bow before the throne of the Father of lights? Thus, upon a view of the moral state of mankind, our great Master taught his disciples to pray. From the reason and nature of the thing He may be considered as teaching us also to pray thus. Such requests are only the Petition, 'thy kingdom come' in the excellent form of prayer He hath taught us, amplified and drawn out into particulars. For how is his kingdom to come, unless there be those who are able and disposed to preach it? How are they to preach, unless they be sent? By whom are they to be sent, qualified and raised up, but by the all-disposing providence of heaven?

Were these things duely considered we should be ready to prompt and encourage pious youth of abilities to engage in a course of studies for this office. It can never be meant that we should pray, that God would send labourers into his harvest and yet withhold our assistance from the candidates for the office and neglect all means of increasing their number. [Yet something of this kind is found among us. If youth in the lower ranks of life offer for this work, the design of assisting their desires is discouraged. And it must be owned that for some obvious reasons they are not the most proper, in general, to be educated for that character; as their connections frequently entail on them great disadvantages,

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and some private Fortune is highly desirable to supply the deficiencies of a scanty income. But the affluent among us, who are most likely to look with contempt on a poor minister, have greater things in view for their children than the honors and emoluments of a pulpit: Thus, while they complain that to fill our pulpits from the meanest of the people is to encumber the interests with calls to charity and to expose it to contempt, it deserves consideration—whether they themselves are not the cause of this contempt and encumbrance. The conduct, in both views, it may be feared, is to be resolved into a declension of rational piety and just zeal among us.

Through this it happens that the character is often spoken of in degrading terms, because it doth not lead to wealth and greatness, even by those from whom we might look for respectable ideas of it's usefulness and dignity, and some generous as well as pious dispositions to countenance and encourage such as bear it. Whereas what can be more useful than to be helpers of the faith, joy and salvation of men? And when the Lord of glory himself appeared under the character of the preacher of righteousness, they who tread in his steps may be permitted modestly to magnify their office.] * Were due weight given to these considerations persons of affluence or property would not so lightly esteem the office: nor be so averse from turning the views and thoughts of their children to a station in life, in which they might so signally and peculiarly serve the cause of truth and the interest of that Master, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor: and therefore may reasonably expect that we should sometimes forego the prospects of wealth and greatness, either ourselves or for ours, in return for what He did and sacrificed for our salvation.

This leads us to one general reflexion arising from this subject, namely that the cause of righteousness and truth ought to be dear to us. It was so to our divine Master.

Indeed

* The Paragraphs between the Crotchets were not delivered at the ordination.

Indeed to Him all other interests were nothing. For this cause He taught and laboured—lived and died—denied himself and suffered on the cross. For this He hath taught us to pray, that there may be an increase and succession of labourers to serve and promote it. If we pray, in his language and his spirit, is not this the object of our daily prayer; “hallowed be thy name: thy kingdom come: thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?” If we be unconcerned whether there be a succession of faithful ministers to instruct and reform men: if we be ready to plead excuses for withholding our assistance to schemes by which the cause of righteousness may be advanced: if we feel no compassion for those who are in danger of perishing through ignorance and vice—do we think on the tenor and purport of our prayers?

Can the Lord of the harvest behold such indifference to the enlightening and saving the world without displeasure? The interests of truth and righteousness are under his eye: but such is the law of his government, they will sink or spread as Men are active or remiss in promoting them; have them at heart or are indifferent to them. He hath, in a great degree, put into our hands the instruction and salvation of our fellow-creatures. This blessed work will go on or not, as we seek it, aim at it, and pray for it. The harvest is great and there is room for all our exertions, for all our zeal. Let us then be awakened to “seek not every man his own things, but every man also the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” To make one more reflexion,

Let this subject excite us to improve our religious advantages. Much more happy is our lot than was that of the multitude who followed Christ. They were in deplorable circumstances, as sheep scattered abroad, having no shepherd. They were sensible of their state, and they followed Christ with ardent desires and with eager attention to hear the word of the kingdom. From reflecting on their conduct we learn our duty; and from comparing our condition with theirs we learn our felicity. In the gospel of the kingdom we have been always instructed. The Lord

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of the harvest hath favoured us with various means of knowledge and edification. We need not expose ourselves to the inconveniencies and fatigues of long and frequent journeys, under which these multitudes were ready to faint. The word is near to us; even in our mouth and in our heart. The harvest is not yet over: the season of knowledge and salvation still continues and will continue to the end of time. Still the Lord of the harvest is sending his ministers among us to preach the gospel of truth and grace. — What is the fruit of this our happy state? Where is our improved knowledge? Where are our zeal and piety, our benevolence and our diligence in working out our salvation? It becomes us to be devoutly thankful, to be candid hearers and diligent doers of the word of God. God forbid, that any of us, by trifling away the precious opportunity, should have occasion at last to adopt the melancholy and bitter reflexion; “the Harvest is past; — the summer is ended; — and we are not saved.”

These reflexions and this subject obviously apply themselves to the present occasion. I congratulate You of this society that our Brother before us has devoted himself to the work of the ministry and the service of your souls; and that Providence has raised Him up, as a successor, when infirmities or death shall put an end to the further labours of my worthy and respected aged Friend.* May He and all of us who are fellow-labourers with Him in the harvest of God, bear upon our minds a serious, lively, constant sense of the great end of our office! We know, my dear Brethren, that we are called to instruct the ignorant, to recover those who have erred from the way of salvation, to feed the sheep of Christ, and to lead his humble disciples to truth, righteousness, comfort, and heaven. How important! How benevolent the office! What affection, what diligence, what zeal doth it require!

Just as well as pious were the sentiments expressed by an eminent Prelate; who, when a Divine came to him for institution to a Living, said: “I have passed through many
places

* Mr. P. Adams.

"places of honour and trust, both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England these seventy years before, But were I assured, that by my preaching I had converted but one soul unto God, I should take therein more spiritual joy and comfort, than in all the honours and offices which have been bestowed upon me." * All earthly honours are perishing, but the salvation of the soul endureth for ever: and faithful endeavours to serve the eternal interests of mankind, shall be rewarded by the "the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls with a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Let our hearts glow with every pious and benevolent emotion in this cause. Let us imitate the temper of our divine Master, who could not see an uninstructed multitude without compassion—nor look on those who rejected the things of their peace without tears—nor behold a lost world without a love stronger than death. Let us admit those considerations which moved his heart. "The harvest is great, the labourers are few." Can we then, who are sent forth into the harvest, be idle and remiss? Can we be indifferent to the spiritual wants of mankind; or neglect to improve those circumstances which demand our vigour, and give room for the exercise of every sacred and generous effort? The Lord of the harvest whom we serve, (it is an animating consideration,) will not be unmindful of our labours of love and zeal. Our work is with the Lord and our reward with our God.

But not only to us who are ministers doth this subject speak: it also reminds *You*. my christian Friends of *your* duty. The occasion particularly enforces it's lessons on you, the Members of the societies, to whose service my Brother hath this day devoted himself. You have seen the great Lord of the harvest raising up and sending into this part of his Vineyard one whom we trust will be a faithful, affectionate and diligent labourer among You. Is not this a reason of devout joy, an incentive to holy gratitude and an obligation to diligence, on your part, to improve under his labours in knowledge and holiness? Be thankful to the Lord

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of the Harvest — Value your own happiness — And fall in with the great design of a good providence in placing among you a Shepherd who will care for your interest. You should contribute cheerfully to his support, that his temporal wants being supplied, He may be more at ease to attend to your best interests, and may be able to set an example of beneficence among You. You should attend on his ministrations with regularity, candor and seriousness. His encouragement and success, and *your own* improvement and salvation depend upon this. Pray, often think with yourselves, how you may concur with his endeavours and make his work more easy. With this view instruct your children and families — Be examples of piety and goodness — Be sober: be honest: be kind: — be devout — Put on the Lord Jesus Christ by Baptism; if you have hitherto neglected this profession of faith — Keep holy the Lord's day: pray in your houses and in your closets: and adorn religion in the world.

You believe in the Gospel; you profess yourselves subjects of Christ's kingdom. Your own salvation should be your first concern: and then the interests of the kingdom of which you are members and the spread of that Gospel which is in you the hope of glory. If the harvest be great, it is *your* duty as well as *ours* to labour in it: to employ your substance, your time, your authority, your abilities and your example to enlighten, reform and save others.

To encourage us all to this, let us reflect, "that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the Sun in the firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever." *Amen.*

Errata:

Page 2, line 6, for they are, read *he is*. — P 8, l, last, after God, read *be*. — P, 13, l, 3, from the bottom, for paragarph, read *paragraph*. — P, 17, l, 2, for Judeah, read here *et alibi*, *Judea*. — P, 20, l, 9, for a protector, read *protection*: and line 14, for mirth, read *truth*. — P. 23, l, 3, for doctrines, read *doctrine*. — P, 17, l, 2, for to, read *on*.



A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE Author of the preceding Sermon,
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Taunton Feb. 17th. 1781

